



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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700 military children earn scholarships

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Note: To see a video on the agency's YouTube page related to Scholarships for Military Children, press the "Ctrl" key and click on the photo or go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbJrphCfYBY>.



For photos on DeCA's Flickr page, go to <https://www.flickr.com/photos/commissary/sets/72157670114693291>.

FORT LEE, Va. – Seven hundred students from military families each received a \$2,000 scholarship this year thanks to the 2016 Scholarships for Military Children program.

The program, created in 2001, recognizes the contributions of military families to the readiness of the fighting force and celebrates the commissary's role in enhancing military quality of life. It's administered by Fisher House Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides assistance to service members and their families.

"With a 13 percent increase in applications this year, the program was even more selective than in the past," said Fisher House Foundation Vice President Jim Weiskopf. "In addition to recognizing the scholastic achievements of the 700 recipients, we owe special appreciation to the Defense Commissary Agency business partners whose donations each year make the scholarship program possible," he added.

No government funds are used to support the program. DeCA's industry partners — vendors, manufacturers, brokers, suppliers — and the general public donate money to fund the program, and every dollar donated goes directly to funding the scholarships. The contributions go to Fisher House Foundation Inc., which treats each as a "restricted donation." The foundation in turn contracts with Scholarship Managers, a professional scholarship management firm, to evaluate the applications and select the best qualified as awardees. In all there were 4,513 qualified applicants this time around.

"I'm always impressed with the creativity and dedication to the pursuit of scholastic excellence shown by these students," said Michael J. Dowling, DeCA deputy director and COO. "These scholarships are a wonderful way to give back to the military communities we serve by investing in the futures of these brilliant children.

"Our stores are honored to host awards ceremonies for the students who've earned a scholarship," Dowling added, "and it's important that we also recognize the support of the many folks — our industry partners and Fisher House Foundation — for making the scholarship program possible."

"The competition among applicants was keen," said Weiskopf. "We are recognizing the best of the best."

One student selected for a scholarship is definitely going places. Megan Stith of Chester, Virginia, said she will be attending school at Queens University Belfast, in Northern Ireland. Her father, Richard, retired from the Army as a chief warrant officer 3 after 24 years of service in 2014.

"I chose to apply there because it is sort of like home base for me," said Stith. "I have friends and family there, because that is where my mother is from, and for me it is a place that I feel grounded. With the help of this generous scholarship, I will be able to continue my international education whilst minimizing my student debt. It is encouraging to know that I have the support of the military community."

The number of scholarship awards each year is based on funds available, but the program awards at least \$2,000 at each military commissary. If there are no eligible applicants from a given commissary, the funds designated for that commissary are awarded as an additional scholarship at a different store.

The list of this year's winners is posted at <http://www.militaryscholar.org/sfmc/winners16.html>.

Planning for next year's program begins soon, and the announcement of open dates to apply is usually made in the fall.

Applications will be available in commissaries worldwide and online at <http://www.militaryscholar.org>. To be eligible to apply for a scholarship, a student must be a dependent, unmarried child, younger than 21 — or 23, if already enrolled as a full-time student at a college or university — of a service member on active duty, reservist, guardsman, retiree or survivor of a military member who died while on active duty or survivor of a retiree.

Applicants should ensure that they, as well as their sponsor, are enrolled in the DEERS database and have a current military ID card.

-DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Commissaries provide a military benefit and make no profit on the sale of merchandise. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. By shopping regularly in the commissary, patrons save an average of about 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings amounting to thousands of dollars annually. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*

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